

# NIFA *Ed-Facts*

National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Division of Community and Education

**Ed-Facts** shares information about new initiatives and activities in the realm of education at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). **Ed-Facts** highlights the impacts of past projects and promotes the visibility of impacts from NIFA-funded education programs.

## **Program Highlights for Last Quarter:**

The 1994 land-grants celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the First Americans Land-Grant Consortium's annual meeting in Minneapolis, Nov. 7-11. Over 150 faculty members and students participated.

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Land-Grants Celebrate Anniversaries

The Panel Review Process Explained.

New staff members and their program assignments.

## **FOCUS: "SPECIAL" PROGRAMS**

The Division of Community and Education (DOCE) manages four "special" programs that promote education in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences. These programs provide educator resources, reward great teaching, measure impacts, and evaluate students' job prospects after graduation. Each of these programs is a resource to educators, students, and all of U.S. agriculture, so your feedback on improving them is welcome. You may [email](#) comments and suggestions to me at [ssureshwaran@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:ssureshwaran@nifa.usda.gov). The four programs are:

**Agriculture in the Classroom (AIRC)** This program helps primary and secondary teachers integrate agricultural science into math, reading, and other subjects. Agricultural representatives and educators created AIRC to promote agricultural literacy during a USDA-sponsored conference in 1981. AIRC has come a long way since then!

Thanks to a partnership between the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) and NIFA's AIRC team, teachers can search the National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix for ag-related lessons sorted by grade level, subject area, keyword, or educational standards. Teachers visiting [AIRC's website](#) find lesson plans for students from kindergarten to high school. To date, 180,000 students have already benefitted from this resource.

NAITCO is a network of AIRC state contacts that supports educators with teacher training. As of 2013, these contacts were in 48 states and six territories. AIRC has helped teachers reach 5.6 million students with ag-education. That's 1 percent of all U.S. pre-college students (K-12). The annual AIRC conference attracts more than 500 U.S. teachers who demonstrate winning strategies to build agricultural literacy at all grade levels through lessons covering reading, writing, science, social studies, and nutrition. In addition, several outstanding teachers receive the NAITC Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award during the conference. In 2014, five teachers accepted this honor.

In 2013, AIRC debuted the National Center for Agricultural Literacy at the University of Nebraska. This center will enhance secondary STEM education in the curriculum matrix, offer professional development for AIRC state contacts, and provide evaluation tools for state AIRC programs.

**National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences:** Launched in 1992, this program recognizes outstanding college professors of agriculture, natural resources, and veterinary and human sciences.. A selection committee of nationally recognized teachers and scholars choose two national recipients and two new teacher awardees. There are also six regional awards for....

The nominees are evaluated on the basis of their ability as instructors, educational innovation, service to students, professionalism, and scholarship. The program is a partnership between NIFA, the University of Florida, and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU). Awards are announced at APLU's annual November meeting. The nomination form and information about the program [are available](#) on NIFA's website.

NIFA provides the funding, APLU manages the application review process, and the University of Florida manages the grant funds and provides recipient support.. Nominations are accepted from land grant universities, non-land grant universities and minority-serving institutions. Teaching philosophy statements and common practices of award-winning teachers are collected and housed [online](#) at as a resource for educators.

## FAQs on 1994 Land-Grants

### What are the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions?

The 1994 Land-Grant Institutions (1994s) are Native American, tribally-controlled colleges and universities that were granted land-grant status under an Act of Congress in 1994. They take special care to include culturally relevant curriculum and programs so that Native American students and communities can take pride in their cultural and historical identity.

For an example of 1994 Land-Grant and their history see:  
[http://landgrant.uttc.edu/re-sources/docs/111314\\_01.pdf](http://landgrant.uttc.edu/re-sources/docs/111314_01.pdf)



### What educational funding is associated with the 1994 Land - Grant Institutions?

There are three competitive programs specifically available to the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions. They are the Tribal Colleges Extension Grant Program, Tribal College Extension-Special Emphasis and the Tribal Colleges Research Grants Program. Tribal College Equity and Endowment are formula funds.

**Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS)** Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) manages the FAEIS database, which is a collection of statistics from colleges that offer educational programs in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences. Any institution with an ag-related program can contribute to this database. Virginia Tech collects data annually on enrollment, student demographics, professors' salaries, graduation data, and job opportunities. Virginia Tech analysts also provide reports based on FAEIS data. These reports are available in an [online newsletter](#). In addition, researchers can contact the FAEIS staff at 540-231-4941 for help with customized data analysis.

Participation from institutions is critical to FAEIS data quality. The Virginia Tech staff will conduct stakeholder outreach to plan major FAEIS upgrades in 2015. Susan Sumner, FAEIS director, and Suresh Sureshwaran, DOCE director, are seeking stakeholder feedback. Sumner can be reached at or by [email](#).

**Report of Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the Food and Agricultural Sciences, United States 2015-2020** Since 1980, NIFA has published 5-year studies on job prospects for graduates in the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences. The latest report, covering 2015 to 2020, will be hot-off-the-press in the spring of 2015. Purdue University analyzed data from the Department of Education and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Purdue combined the statistics with input from deans of agriculture, industry, and others – all of whom donate their time. The feedback and analysis comes from a wide variety of geographic regions and agricultural industries. Prior to publication, preliminary findings for this year's report will also be reviewed at the national meeting of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities.

These reports have become an important reference for guidance counselors, colleges, industry, and federal agencies. Drs. Kyle Jane Coulter and Marge Stanton, both former employees of the USDA Office of Higher Education Programs, were the first to create this report. Cooperative agreements, such as the one NIFA now has with Purdue, have enhanced the depth and quality of subsequent reports. It is the nation's only comprehensive forecast of agricultural employment opportunities that is conducted in partnership with USDA.

## LAND-GRANTS CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARIES



Office of Tribal Relations Staff at the 1994 Ceremony.  
Photo:: Cory Legall

The 1994 land-grant institutions celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Nov. 13 with a special observance at USDA's Whitten Patio. Dr. Joseph McDonald, president emeritus of Salish Kootenai College, and Dr. Phil Baird, acting president of United Tribes Technical College, spoke as part of a panel on the 1994 land-grants' legacy. Both men played key roles in these institutions' history.

In 2015, the 1890 land-grants will celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Morrill Act, which created their institutions. There will be observances throughout the year, including several events in Washington, DC, the week of July 13-16. The 1890 institutions have produced a [video](#) on YouTube about this special moment in their history.

## THE PEER PANEL REVIEW PROCESS EXPLAINED

Wanted: Professionals from diverse backgrounds who have time to share their expertise in grant review panels—all regions and perspectives needed from scientists to school teachers. This is not a real want ad, but it is NIFA's philosophy when it comes to panel composition.

“This year, Leech Lake Tribal College had two graduates and two transfer students continue their education at a 4-year institution. Their successful transition is evidence that our science and math programs are producing quality students who can continue their education at any college or university.”

**Kelly Nipp,**  
**Mathematics**  
**Instructor,** Leech Lake Tribal College in 2012



“Attending the FALCON conference was great. As a new land-grant director, I was inspired by what my peers have achieved through NIFA funding. I left FALCON very excited about the upcoming grant year.”

**Margaret Knox,**  
**Director of the**  
**Agricultural Division,** Sitting Bull College, after the 2014 FALCON event.

The review process is at the core of NIFA’s competitive funding programs and ensures that applications are evaluated fairly and meritoriously. NIFA staff ensures that Requests for Applications (RFAs) conform to guidance before any panelist sees an application. In this programmatic review, NIFA staff make sure each proposal was submitted by the deadline, within budget, and addressed funding priorities and addressed other administrative requirements. The peer panel is the second review where scientific experts – primarily academic and federal researchers – evaluate applications. NIFA selects these reviewers for relevant expertise in scientific disciplines or teaching areas. While these panels make the funding recommendations, only NIFA’s Office of Grants and Financial Management is authorized to make final funding decisions.

DOCE is working to enhance the diversity of its panels. To monitor panel diversity, DOCE participates in an annual survey of panel demographics, conducted by NIFA’s Institute of Youth, Family, and Community (IYFC). This survey demonstrates IYFC’s commitment to panel diversity, fair evaluations, and the prevention of conflicts of interest or other inappropriate influences.

Table 1 represents the panel makeup for the 286 panelists who participated in IYFC’s 2014 grant season – with DOCE representing 77 percent of the panels in the survey.

**Table 1: IYFC Peer-Review Panels Composition  
FY 2014**

Category	Percentage
Women and Minorities	
Minority Male	34%
Minority Female	20%
Non-Minority Male	22%
Non-Minority Female	23%
Geography	
Northeast	26%
North Central	20%
South	35%
West	19%
Rank and Affiliation	
Professors	29%
1862 Land-Grants	47%
Minority-Serving Institutions	25%
Federal Government	12%
Panel Continuity	
Returning from 2012 Panels	17%
Returning from 2011 Panels	7%

DOCE encourages education and research professionals to [register online](#) with NIFA’s Peer Review System (PRS) as potential panelists. If you feel your experience suits you to review education proposals, you may also email your resume to DOCE Director Dr. [Suresh Sureshwaran](#).

“Peer review panels are the best method available to review and rank applications for funding,” said Sureshwaran. “Panel success depends on the availability and the impartiality of the scientific evaluators we select.”

The task of a NIFA panelist is two-fold. First, panelists read the RFA to understand the program priorities and evaluation criteria they will use to evaluate each application. Next, they log into PRS to read the applications and write a brief review of each proposal.

These individual reviews, done prior to panel, allow each participant to capture their initial thoughts without any input from others. On average, panelists are given four weeks to complete their written reviews before participating in the panel process. Very often DOCE panels are conducted online, but we may ask panelists to come to NIFA Headquarters in Washington, DC, to take part in the discussions. Panel discussions among reviewers identify the strengths and the weaknesses of each application. At the conclusion of these discussions, panelists write summary reviews to explain the review outcomes to each applicant. Also, before the conclusion of the meeting, the panel will rank all the proposals with the top-ranking ones to be recommended for funding.

## MORE INFORMATION

For questions, comments, and/or suggestions please contact:

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Director, Division of Community and Education

[Jill Lee](#), program specialist, Division of Community and Education

[Lindell Williams](#), program specialist, Division of Community and Education

Visit the NIFA website for [more information on DOCE](#) programs, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Waterfront Centre, 800 9th St. SW., Washington, DC 20024, Mailing Address: 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Stop 2201; Washington, DC 20250-2201

## DOCE TEAM WELCOMES THREE NEW MEMBERS

DOCE has three new staff members – a national program leader, a program specialist, and a program assistant. Here's a bit of information about each new team member:

**Dr. Victoria LeBeaux** This national program leader had first-hand knowledge of NIFA coming into the job. "I was supported by NIFA's National Needs Graduate Fellowship Program (NNF) to complete my doctorate in Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University in 2013," she said. "My dissertation research was supported by the NNF International Research and Travel Award. I investigated the challenges faced by food security outreach organizations in Eastern Guatemala."

LeBeaux comes to NIFA from the College of Agriculture at the University of Kentucky in Lexington where she was a postdoctoral researcher. She holds a BA in Economics (2006) and an MS in Agricultural Economics (2008), both from the University of Georgia. She also has a Certificate in International Agriculture (2006) and has worked in Guatemala, Mexico, France, and Austria.

LeBeaux's primary responsibility will be for secondary and undergraduate education, and her portfolio will include Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Undergraduate Fellowships program, Higher Education Challenge Grants, Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education program, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom Challenge Grants Program. She also provides support for the National Agriculture in the Classroom Initiative mentioned in the first article of this issue.

**Dave Wagner** DOCE's newest program specialist will work with some 1890 grant programs and other special projects. Prior to joining NIFA, Wagner was a management assistant with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He has an MS degree in natural resources from Virginia Tech. In addition, he has done research in China and served with the Peace Corps in South America.

**Johnnie Tillman** Tillman came to NIFA from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) where he was a program assistant performing research and program analysis. While working with HUD, he was also responsible for statistical data and quarterly reports for year-end actions. He is an Army veteran and managed human resource office records during his military service. He worked at the Veterans Affairs police department as a security assistant and managed applications while earning his AA degree in acquisitions and contract management.

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